

Microsoft service makes research a social affair

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An "experimental" project by Microsoft to mix online social networking and academic research was open to the public on Monday.

The Redmond, Washington-based software colossus invited anyone to join its Internet community at so.cl, which was pronounced "social."

"So.cl is an experimental research project, developed by Microsoft's FUSE Labs, focused on exploring the possibilities of [social search](#) for the purpose of learning," a frequently-asked-questions page at the website said.

"So.cl combines social networking and search to help people find and share interesting Web pages in the way students do when they work together."

The online community had previously only welcomed students studying information and design at select US universities.

As of Monday, those interested in getting involved with the social network were invited to send messages to socl@microsoft.com.

"We expect students to continue using products such as Facebook, Twitter, [LinkedIn](#) and other existing social networks, as well as Bing, [Google](#) and other search tools," the facts page at the website said.

"We hope to encourage students to re-imagine how our everyday

communication and learning tools can be improved, by researching, learning and sharing in their everyday lives."

However, so.cl hints at having greater aspirations with banners displaying messages inviting people to "discover like minded people," express themselves, and have fun.

The opening of the so.cl gates came ahead of a day of Nasdaq trading in which Facebook's freshly-issued shares plunged nearly 11 percent.

The stock closed at \$34.03, down 10.99 percent for the day and well below the \$38 [initial public offering](#) price, which made [Facebook](#) the second largest US IPO of all time when it went public on Friday.

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